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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [UNSC](#) [AG](#) [MO](#) [WI](#)
SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR BOLTON PROPOSES TO JUMP START SECURITY
COUNCIL ACTION ON WESTERN SAHARA

REF: STATE 48549

Classified By: Amb. John Bolton. E.O. 12958. Reasons 1.4 (b/d)

¶1. (C) Summary. The conflict in Western Sahara remains at a stalemate. From my perspective in New York, a fresh approach to Security Council action on MINURSO's mandate is one available option if we seek to accelerate Moroccan action on autonomy for the Western Sahara. If such an approach fails to win the support of other members of the Security Council, I recommend hosting direct talks between Morocco and the Polisario in New York. Absent these initiatives, Polisario frustration is likely to compound unhelpfully. The stasis in the Security Council after more than 15 years of engagement in this issue contributes to an erosion of Council effectiveness. End Summary.

Whither Morocco's Autonomy Proposal?

¶2. (C) Prior to the decision by the Security Council in October 2005 to extend the MINURSO mandate for another six months, the Moroccan government indicated that it would draft an autonomy plan for the Western Sahara and share it with the Security Council prior to April 2006, when the Council was scheduled to again consider extension of the MINURSO mandate. In March 2006, the Moroccan government sent a delegation to Washington to inform U.S. officials that Rabat had indeed prepared a draft autonomy plan for Western Sahara, but asserted that it would require an additional six to nine months for "consultations" within Morocco before a finalized plan could be presented to the Council. In addition, the Moroccans told U.S. officials that we should be prepared for up to two additional six-month renewals of MINURSO before the presentation of the plan (reftel). In recent days, Moroccan officials in New York have been repeating the same message to Security Council delegations at the UN, asserting that up to one year may be required to complete its internal consultations. I understand King Mohammed VI sent a letter to the President conveying the same "consultations" argument.

¶3. (C) It appears the Moroccans are resorting to their time-honored tactic of stalling for time and relying on a risk-averse Security Council to renew MINURSO's mandate routinely on the grounds that failure to do so might cause an outbreak of violence in the region. The other parties in the region -- the Polisario and Algeria -- have already denounced the Moroccan autonomy plan, even though it has not been rolled out, based on their assumption that any plan drafted by Morocco would exclude any option allowing for "self-determination." As Special Envoy van Walsum has indicated to the Council, no progress is possible on the status of the Western Sahara until parties engage with each

other. Routine renewal of MINURSO's mandate -- first established more than 15 years ago -- will do nothing to generate movement toward such engagement.

¶4. (C) I believe that acknowledging Morocco's announcement that it needs an additional six to twelve months for "consultations" would constitute USG acquiescence to their effort to put off submission of an autonomy plan without condition and indefinitely. I judge the Moroccan effort to perpetuate the status quo, which is heavily in their favor, through inaction to be ill-advised. Moreover it is an effort unlikely to work. The so-called Western Sahrawi intifada, begun in October 2005, has succeeded in drawing international attention to the issue of human rights in the Western Sahara. Moroccan stonewalling of international observer missions has only compounded Sahrawi frustrations and increased their determination for a hearing of their grievances.

Polisario Reaction -----

¶5. (C) The Polisario leadership traveled to New York the first week of April to make its case to the Secretary-General and to most members of the Security Council. They have argued that they are nearing the end of their patience. They say that they have observed the cease-fire; they have accepted the Baker Plan, which Morocco subsequently rejected; and have released the remaining Moroccan prisoners of war; and yet there has been no progress toward a referendum. They are angry with the Secretary-General, who has allowed his Personal Envoy to suggest that the Baker Plan is dead and to suggest that a Moroccan autonomy plan be the starting point of any future negotiation. They are deeply disappointed that the Security Council has not reaffirmed its commitment to the Baker Plan and self-determination for the Sahrawi and has

done little to move the process forward.

New Approach to MINURSO Mandate Renewal -----

¶5. (C) In light of the above, I propose the following alternative approach. I recommend we seek a resolution to extend for a limited period the current mandate. The resolution should include the following elements:

- extend MINURSO's mandate for 90 days,
- call on the Secretary-General to report to the Council on the status of Morocco's plan for resolution of the status of Western Sahara to the Council within that period,
- call on the parties in the region to engage in direct discussions on the future status of Western Sahara, and
- call on the Secretary-General to report to the Council prior to the end of the 90-day mandate on the prospects for MINURSO carrying out its mandate to observe a referendum on the final status of Western Sahara.

Direct Talks -----

¶6. (C) If the member states of the Security Council are unable to agree to this approach as means of imposing a solution, the next best alternative is to continue to encourage dialogue between the parties. As Morocco has publicly stated it will only negotiate with Algeria, and given that Algeria continues to insist that only the Polisario should negotiate with Morocco, then perhaps we need to think about more creative ways of facilitating dialogue. One way the parties might be brought together would be if I, with the Department's authorization, were to offer to host at USUN an unofficial meeting between Morocco and the Polisario. I understand that when the subject of unofficial meetings with the Polisario was raised with some Moroccan officials in Washington, there was a positive response. Our soundings

here with the Polisario have thus far been met with silence but not rejection. We should consider actively pursuing this strategy.

BOLTON